

The Log of The Seven Bells Club

By Charles Dryden.

In Which Capt. Jute Commits the Heinous Crime of Mayhem on the High Seas

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SOME hours in advance of daylight on the morning of her second day out the trading bark Lulu Alice, from San Francisco to Samboia, was subject to internal interruptions. With each roll of the vessel on a rising sea something of body and weight slid across the cabin and banged dents in the wainscoting.

Mr. Willie Bloke, tourist, burrowed into his bloated straw mattress and tried to forget the smell in refreshing slumber. In his berth, across the cabin, Capt. Theodore P. Jute, organizer of the Seven Bells Club, tossed and cursed. He, too, needed repose after thumping the cook on the teeth at the get-away. Again the object skated across the cabin and fetched up with a crash like a Chinese orchestra handing out a fortissimo climax.

"Jute must be a walking in his sleep," muttered Mr. Barnacle, keeping moody vigil on the cabin roof. "And yet I ain't seen no nightmare grub in this here hooker."

He made another turn on the lookout and again the orchestra exploded in the cabin.

"There he goes some more," said Bill. "Good thing for the Lulu Alice that I'm awake and sober. Wot would become of us, I don't know."

While Bill thus extolled his own important state of sobriety the voice of Jute rumbled up the companion.

"Come down here and see what's kicking up this infernal racket."

"It ain't him after all. I was mistook," said Bill. Groping into the cabin the chief mate collided with the disturbing element which was shooting the chutes to leeward. The impact scraped the morocco binding off Bill's shoes and knocked him under the table.

"Did you get it?" asked Jute. "No, the darn thing got me," snarled Bill. "Rasped me proper with its dorsal fin."

"Well, does it bite, draw or gouge? What is it?"

Striking a match, the mate seized his late antagonist on the next slide and looked it over.

"Black tin box, two feet square, sir. Marked M. T. on the blooming lid."

"Empty?" said Jute. "Sounds like she was loaded with dynamite. Me and the kid couldn't sleep."

This courteous allusion to himself never touched Mr. Bloke. Nothing could sting him now, having survived one day and night of his deep-sea vacation.

"Make the box fast," the captain ordered, "and let us get a few more winks."

Bill lashed the orchestra to a leg of the table and a holy calm fell upon the cabin. Day had come when Capt. Jute, but slightly refreshed, arose from his couch and sought the open air. He passed through the forward door and into the lobby left by jutting plank ends that comprised the lumber cargo piled high on deck. Outside the door he tripped over a handspike projecting from a crevice, fell forward and filled his brow with splinters.

"A gang of farmers must have loaded this vessel!" howled the mutilated commander, grabbing the bit of rounded wood and trying to drag it clear. "It was a trap set to break my neck."

Erupting threats and much seaworthy profanity, he hauled and tore at the spike. It was wedged fast. The pallid Mr. Bloke, in his wrinkled suit of near-

duck, toddled to the door while Mr. Barnacle from the lookout on the cabin roof gazed in respectful awe at the struggle in the hole. The captain paused to moisten his palms.

"Did you know that handspike was a menace to human lives?"

"I did not," said Bill. "I never knewed it was there."

"Bring a saw and cut it off. The spike is ship's property and worth money; but, by blush, I won't kill myself to save it!"

The mate brought a 10-cent counter saw and attacked the spike. When the severed end dropped away the other was drawn in, and out flowed a line of language that surpassed any remarks the skipper had yet placed on file, and he was an impresario.

"Holy poop deck, what does that mean?" gasped Jute.

More language dribbled from the hole, followed by onions in sacks, a couple of bundles of shingles and other high-class junk. Then appeared the elderly, one-eyed face and ardent red whiskers of Mr. Mortimer Tokens, stowaway-surrogate passenger on board the Lulu Alice.

"Help me out of this crack," he said in matter-of-fact tones. "Since you've sawed my leg off I'm on the bum for speed. Never was much in that line."

Like men in a trance, Bill and the captain dragged the stowaway from his lair, boosted him to the upper levels and gave him a seat on the cabin roof.

"Very good, thus far, and I thank you, gentlemen," said Mr. Tokens. "Now, then, where's my dog? Come here, Ike, old boy."

Out of the crevice in the lumber rolled a seashell bull pup, pink of eye and shaggy on his pins. Ike was about all in. Mr. Bloke lifted Stowaway No. 2 to the top of the lumber and gave him a push that sent him reeling to the foot of his master. There he crouched while the pair focused three eyes and one empty socket on the skipper.

By this time Jute had speech for the man who helped him found the Seven Bells Club. Folding his arms and planting his feet wide the commander of the Lulu Alice addressed the stowaway in slow and measured accents.

"So that was your trunk banging the point of my cabin all last night?"

"I were."

"I saw the initials M. T. as I came out, but I never suspected you." Though outwardly calm, Jute was holding back the explosion that was to obliterate Mr. Tokens at a single swipe.

"You have come to stay, I take it, you bankrupt booze admirer?"

"No, I'm on my way, but don't know where I'm going."

"Are you aware I can have you arrested for stowing away in my ship?"

Mr. Tokens stuffed a wad of whiskers between his lips, gazed over the wide, wide waste of waters, and then turned his lonesome eye upon the captain.

"Fetch on your cops and I'll make a counter charge."

Fully fifty per cent of ferocity dispersed from the face and voice of Jute.

"What do you mean by a counter charge? What crime have I committed?"

"Mayhem on the high seas. The brainy Mr. Tokens had played his ace.

On hearing these fearful words, Mr. Barnacle permitted a spasm to pass through his system, and even that intellectual journalist, Mr. Bloke, had a dim sort of hunch. Mayhem on the high seas sent him glimmering for a minute.

"As I understand the term," the cap-

tain gently ventured, "mayhem means to bite or mutilate with the teeth."

"The same," said the victim of mayhem. "A saw has teeth; it was your saw that cut my leg off. I heard you give the order, and I'm mutilated, ain't I?"

Mr. Tokens grew justly incensed. "You may know a little marine law—a very little—but I was up in criminal jurisprudence, sir, while your bedding was still poisoning the fish off Ellis Island."

"Sir," said the captain, "I never was an immigrant in my life. I was born under the Stars and Stripes, and can prove it."

"We will not discuss your birth certificate at this time," Mr. Tokens said, coldly. "It is quite irrelevant, non compos mentis and materialistic. The status quo of the case is this: I'm mutilated and it's up to you," and the victim of mayhem fanned himself with the severed peg-leg, a scepter with which he ruled the situation.

The captain took a long look at the boundless ocean, which was four miles deep at that point.

"Then stay on board till we get to Samboia," he snapped. "It means two more ugly mouths to feed and nothing coming in. What is there for that bilious cur to eat?"

"They eat the same things I do—butter cakes."

Uttering a hopeless howl, Jute plunged into the cabin, followed by the mate.

"If I were you, sir," said Mr. Bloke, "I wouldn't allude to butter in the presence of the captain. It irritates him. Try a little salve."

"What, me eat salve?" blazed Mr. Tokens, turning on the tourist. "Say, bub, do you take me for a Philino?"

"Pardon me," said Willie, deeply confused. "By salve I meant pacific measures—soothing words, you know. Don't speak of butter. Some of his sailors wanted it once, and two of them are still in the hospital."

"Oh, I see now. I'm onto Jute," said the stowaway, warning to Mr. Bloke and gazing at the giddy touring clothes.

"Who the devil are you, anyway?"

"Just another stowaway like yourself, only I paid passage," replied Willie, his under lip quivering, "and it is simply awful. I lost my job in Frisco and wanted a vacation, and they roped me into this four-flush outfit. Isn't it the limit?"

"There may be distressing features in life on the bounding billers," Mr. Tokens admitted, looking at the stump of his sawed-off leg. "Accidents will happen."

"Do you call hiding away in this rotten tub an accident?" Willie wanted to know.

"I done it on purpose," Mortimer confessed. "Had to escape quick on account of a love affair."

"Honestly, now," said Willie, "you don't look like a man who would play Santa Claus to a factory girl."

"She was a widow lady," Mr. Tokens said, softly. "Nothing young and giddy in mine. Her furniture was pretty old, too, though I never seen it. I didn't want it, anyhow. She has a brother on the force, and they made it so hot I skipped."

"How did you manage to get on the ship?" Willie asked.

"Sneaked aboard in the night and had a stevedore smuggle my trunk into the cabin. There is 300 second-hand razors in that tin Saratoga. They tell me the cannibals in Samboia shave with busted beer bottles, so I'm going down to open a tonorial supply house at fancy prices. I'll show 'em."

Just then the mate came up from below and stood before the stowaway.

There was deference in Bill's manner.

"The captain, he says, would Mr. Tokens have a cup of good coffee?"

Mr. Tokens bowed stiffly.

While putting in the hot drink and a biscuit brought by the cook, the stowaway wore the aspect of one entirely absorbed on the Pacific. His eye faded into a far-away look, and he stirred the coffee with a 60-cent table d'hôte air. Bill edged closer and closer and finally dropped a hairy paw on the knee of Mr. Tokens.

"I liked you, Morty, the night of the party ashore, but I don't hold no grudge. Let has-beens be has-beens. And, say, I'll make you a new leg."

"Well, I should hope so. I can't set here on the cabin roof all my days."

"Will you have it hard or soft?"

"Must the leg be boiled, or are you going to steam it?" Morty asked, with some irritation.

"Hard or soft wood is wot I mean," stammered Bill.

Make it soft, for my step is light and airy."

The mate got tools and a stick of pine, and set to work, while Mr. Bloke watched the operation.

"Is mayhem on the high seas a proper serious crime?" Bill asked.

"Term in the pen at hard labor and beans," said the victim. "Mayhem is next to hitting a man with spectacles on his face. There's a \$600 fine for that. I reckon you know it?"

Bill didn't know it till that moment, but he believed that popular fallacy current among tough mugs.

"Get a biscuit for the dog."

Not only did Bill subpoena a biscuit, but he had the nerve to spread it with butter and smile at Ike when he served the tidbit.

"For a seafaring man, I'm proper fond of dogs myself," said Bill. "I worship 'em. Ever see a wrist dog?"

After thinking it over, Mr. Tokens had never seen one, he said.

"Curious and likewise queer little animal," Bill went on. "They has 'em thick in China. Little cusses, they are, no bigger than kittens. Rich mandareens wear the wrist dog on the sleeve. His front legs is bent like an ice tong, and he hooks onto the pulse and sticks there, a peering out of the sleeve. Now, 'spose another rich mandareen comes up to slap the first one on the wrist. Wot does he do? He shoves out the dog and gives the other Chink a proper dose of hydrophobia."

This remarkable method of conferring hydrophobia while you wait softened Mr. Tokens. He said he thought he would like the new leg fully as well as the old one.

"We have a singular dog in San Francisco," Mr. Bloke butted in with, seeing that dogs struck the popular fancy. "He's a wonder and then some. At the corner, junks they chase jack rabbits with greyhounds. One season an epidemic killed off the rabbits and the sport was about to blow. But a smart Irishman crossbred the greyhound and the jack rabbit, and produced an animal that could chase itself."

"The idee," said Bill, staggered to the verge of disbelief.

"Wait till Ike gets a chance to show off," warned Mr. Tokens. "He's a ship-pin."

Meanwhile Bill had finished the leg. He beveled one side of the stump and an end of the new peg, fastened them together with screws and tacked a band of sheet brass over the joint.

"There you are," said Bill, stepping back to note the general effect. "Any gent could be proud of that jury leg. It's a good fit, I hope."

Mr. Tokens strapped himself into the harness and took a turn about the deck, holding onto the rigging. Finding that the jury leg worked according to Hoyle, all hands went down for breakfast. The stowaway helped himself twice to the butter, and the captain never said a word.

At 4 o'clock in the afternoon a fuzzy, blue-eyed young giant crowded out of the forward house. He was one of the drugged seamen dumped aboard when the Lulu Alice sailed the previous day at noon.

"Wot's your name?" asked the mate, who had the watch on deck.

"T. Wilson, of Ohio," the fuzzy one replied, glaring wildly around.

"Sink the Ohio part and take the wheel," said Bill.

"Oh, very well," replied T. Wilson, stumbling off toward the bow.

"I said the wheel, you half-baked lobster."

This gentle hint told T. Wilson the wheel must lie in the other direction. He worked his way aft to the cockpit, relieved the man at the spokes, and in an instant had the bark flat aback. She swung around bow to the wind, with the sails slapping and banging and threatening to rip the masts up by the roots. The second mate, awakened by the canonading, came tearing up from his bunk arrayed in a short undershirt. All hands, save Mr. Tokens, laid hold of the braces. After a lot of handling and yanking the old bark swung back on her course and the uproar subsided.

"Are you a sailor?" Jute demanded of T. Wilson, who had stood open-mouthed while the fireworks were going off.

"I am not, never was and never expect to be. They kidnapped me, I guess."

"What is your business?" asked Jute, edging up, but not daring to hit the lobster because of his size.

"I'm a farmer. That's all."

Of all professional men the tiller of the soil at sea arouses the direst contempt in the bosom of the honest mariner. Jute stood speechless and glaring at T. Wilson until an idea struck him.

"There's a pig in the pen under the bow. Go forward and scrub him. That's the only agricultural pursuit open to you here. And when you've got him scrubbed," yelled the captain, as the farmer went slouching away, "you may manure his boots!"

Spirited squeals from the bow soon proclaimed that T. Wilson, of Ohio, was getting in his deadly work with the scrubbing brush down on the farm.

"That's another way we captains get it in the neck," sighed Jute, explaining to the tourist. "The crimps shanghaied that cuss off a hay wagon, and I signed him as an able seaman, paying the crimps three months' advance at \$25 per month. They've got my good money, and I've got a cornfield sailor. Hell!"

A louder squeal from the pig drove the captain to the soothing shelter of his

